

M 2461

**TRUE
BLUE!
THAT'S
YOU?**

BY
THEODORE S. HENDERSON

a Lincoln item
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TRUE BLUE

"With malice toward none, and with charity for all, let us strive to do the right, as God shall give us to see the right."

So said a man that was True Blue. To him, to be right was of more concern than it was to be President of the United States. Position and policy played no part with this hero. He was President of the United States when he said it; people were criticising him in a cruel fashion; his enemies were lying about him; some of his trusted friends were deserting him; the newspapers ridiculed him; but he was True Blue; he never wavered from his convictions of right. He would rather die than lie; he refused to play the coward when it seemed so much cheaper to be cowardly than courage-

ous. In one of the darkest hours of American history he said to the American people, when it almost seemed as if the cause of slavery would win against freedom: "Let us hold fast the faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us dare to do our duty to the end as we understand it." Loyalty to duty made him True Blue. This man of True Blue was Abraham Lincoln. He was not only True Blue himself; he helped others to be True Blue, too.

Bennie Owen was a farmer boy in the State of Vermont. When Abraham Lincoln sent out a call for volunteer soldiers to help put down the rebellion, called the Civil War, Bennie Owen begged permission of his father to enlist. After much pleading Father Owen gave his consent, and Bennie went to war. With him went Jemmie Carr, a neighbor's son; and these two homes were always filled with anxiety, fearing some evil tid-

ings might come that one or both of these boys had been killed in battle.

One morning a telegram was received by Farmer Owen, and this is how it read: "Private Benjamin Owen, —— Regiment, Vermont Volunteers, was found asleep at his post while on picket duty last night. The court-martial has sentenced him to be shot in twenty-four hours, as the offense occurred at a critical time."

Mr. Allen, the village minister, had heard of the sad news, and hurried to the home of the Owen family to give them counsel and comfort.

"I thought, Mr. Allen, when I gave my Bennie to his country that not a father in all this broad land made so precious a gift—no, not one. The dear boy only slept a minute, just one little minute, at his post; I know that was all, for Bennie never dozed over a duty. How prompt and reliable he was! I know he only fell asleep one little second; he was so young, and not

strong, that boy of mine! Why, he was as tall as I and only eighteen! and now they shoot him because he was found asleep when doing sentinel duty. Twenty-four hours, the telegram said—only twenty-four hours. Where is Bennie now?"

"We will hope with his heavenly Father," said Mr. Allen, soothingly.

"Yes, yes; let us hope; God is very merciful."

"'I should be ashamed, father,' Bennie said, 'when I am a man, to think I never used this great right arm,' and he held it out so proudly before me—'for my country, when it needed it. Palsy it rather than keep it at the plow.'

"'Go, then, go, my boy,' I said, 'and God keep you!' God has kept him, I think, Mr. Allen!" and the farmer repeated these last words slowly, as if, in spite of his reason, his heart doubted them.

"Like the apple of his eye, Mr. Owen; doubt it not."

Blossom sat near them listening with blanched cheek. She had not shed a tear. Her anxiety had been so concealed that no one had noticed it. She had occupied herself mechanically in the household cares. Now she answered a gentle tap at the kitchen door, opening it to receive from a neighbor's hand a letter. "It is from him," was all she said.

It was like a message from the dead. Mr. Owen took the letter, but could not break the envelope on account of his trembling fingers, and held it toward Mr. Allen, with the helplessness of a child. The minister opened it and read as follows:

"Dear Father: When this reaches you I shall be in eternity. At first it seemed awful to me, but I have thought about it so much now that it has no terror. They say they will not bind me, nor blind me; but that I

may meet my death like a man. I thought, father, it might have been on the battlefield, for my country, and that when I fell it would be fighting gloriously; but to be shot down like a dog for nearly betraying it—to die for neglect of duty! Oh! father, I wonder the very thought does not kill me! But I shall not disgrace you. I am going to write you all about it; and when I am gone, you may tell my comrades. I cannot now.

“You know I promised Jemmie Carr’s mother I would look after her boy, and when he fell sick I did all I could for him. He was not strong when he was ordered back into the ranks, and the day before that night I carried all his luggage, besides my own, on our march. Toward night we went in on the double-quick, and though the luggage began to feel very heavy, everybody else was tired, too; and as for Jemmie, if I had not lent him an arm now and then he would

have dropped by the way. I was all tired out when we went into camp, and it was Jemmie's turn to be sentry, and I *would* take his place; but I was too tired, father. I could not have kept awake if a gun had been pointed at my head; but I did not know it until—well, until it was too late.”

“God be thanked!” interrupted Mr. Owen, reverently. “I knew Bennie was not the boy to sleep *carelessly* at his post.”

“They tell me today that I have a short reprieve given to me by circumstances—‘time to write to you,’ our good colonel says. Forgive him, father; he only does his duty; he would gladly save me if he could; and do not lay my death up against Jemmie. The poor boy is broken-hearted, and does nothing but beg and entreat them to let him die in my stead.

“I can’t bear to think of mother and Blossom. Comfort them, father! Tell them I die as a brave boy should and

that when the war is over they will not be ashamed of me, as they must be now. God help me; it is very hard to bear! Good-bye, father! God seems near and dear to me; not at all as if he wished me to perish forever, but as if he felt sorry for his poor, sinful, broken-hearted child, and would take me to be with him and my Saviour in a better, better life."

A deep sigh burst from Mr. Owen's heart. "Amen," he said solemnly, "Amen."

"Tonight, in the early twilight, I shall see the cows all coming home from pasture, and precious little Blossom stand on the back stoop, waiting for me; but I shall never, never come! God bless you all! Forgive your poor Bennie."

Late that night the door of the "back stoop" opened softly and a little figure glided out and down the footpath that led to the road by the mill. She seemed rather flying than

walking, turning her head neither to the right nor to the left, looking only now and then to heaven, and folding her hands, as if in prayer. Two hours later the same young girl stood at the Mill Depot, watching the coming of the night train; and the conductor, as he reached down to lift her into the car, wondered at the tear-stained face that was upturned toward the dim lantern he held in his hand. A few questions and ready answers told him all, and no father could have cared more tenderly for his only child than he for our little Blossom. She was on her way to Washington to ask President Lincoln for her brother's life. She had stolen away, leaving only a note to tell where and why she had gone. She had brought Bennie's letter with her; no good, kind heart, like the President's could refuse to be melted by it. The next morning they reached New York and the conductor hurried her on to Washington. Every

minute now might be the means of saving her brother's life. And so, in an incredibly short time Blossom reached the Capital and hastened immediately to the White House.

The President had just seated himself to his morning task of overlooking and signing important papers, when, without one word of announcement, the door opened softly and Blossom, with downcast eyes and folded hands, stood before him.

"Well, my child," he said, in his pleasant, cheerful tones, "what do you want, so bright and early in the morning?"

"Bennie's life, please, sir," faltered Blossom.

"Bennie? Who is Bennie?"

"My brother, sir. They are going to shoot him for sleeping at his post."

"Oh, yes," and Mr. Lincoln ran his eye over the papers before him, "I remember. It was a fatal sleep. You see, child, it was a time of special

danger. Thousands of lives might have been lost for his culpable negligence."

"So my father said," replied Blossom, gravely, "but poor Benie was so tired, sir, and Jemmie so weak. He did the work of two, sir, and it was Jemmie's night, not his; but Jemmie was too tired, and Bennie never thought about himself, that he was tired, too."

"What is this you say, child? Come here, I do not understand," and the kind man caught eagerly, as ever, at what seemed to be a justification of an offense.

Blossom went to him; he put his hand tenderly on her shoulder, and turned up her pale, anxious face toward his. How tall he seemed! and he was President of the United States, too. A dim thought of this kind passed for a moment through Blossom's mind; but she told her simple

and straightforward story and handed Mr. Lincoln Bennie's letter to read.

He read it carefully; then, taking up his pen, wrote a few hasty lines and rang his bell.

Blossom heard this order given: "Send this dispatch at once."

The President then turned to the girl and said: "Go home, my child, and tell that father of yours, who could approve his country's sentence, even when it took the life of a child like that, that Abraham Lincoln thinks the life far too precious to be lost. Go back, or wait until tomorrow; Bennie will need a change after he has so gravely faced death; he shall go with you."

"God bless you, sir," said Blossom; and who shall doubt that God heard and registered the request?

Two days after this interview the young soldier came to the White House with his little sister. He was called into the President's private

room, and a strap fastened upon the shoulder. Mr. Lincoln then said: "The soldier that could carry a sick comrade's baggage and die so uncomplainingly, deserves well of his country." Then Bennie and Blossom took their way to their Green Mountain home. A crowd gathered at the Mill Depot to welcome them back; and, as Farmer Owen's hand grasped that of his boy, tears flowed down his cheeks, and he was heard to say fervently, "The Lord be praised!"

Bennie Owen was True Blue. He was true under fire. He would rather die than lie, or be a coward! Would you? Abraham Lincoln was President of the United States, and was True Blue. Bennie Owen was a soldier boy and was True Blue. Each was True Blue in his own place. Are you? When you are tempted to lie, will you be truthful? When you are tempted to do wrong, will you do right? When you are tempted to be selfish, will you

be unselfish? When you are tempted to be careless about duty, will you be earnest and true? When you are tempted to be a coward, will you be brave? When you are tempted to be hateful and disagreeable, will you be loving and kind? When you are tempted to be lazy and worthless, will you be useful? When you are tempted not to care what others think of you, will you try to be an example to others? It means all this to be True Blue.

At play, at work, at school, at home, at church—everywhere, will you be True Blue?

And will you help some one else to be True Blue?

Be True Blue to Conscience.

Be True Blue to Christ.

Be True Blue to the Church.

Be True Blue to Conscience

Be True Blue to Christ

Be True Blue to the Church

Comrades of the Cross

HERE'S THE CROSS

“He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.”

—Matthew X : 38.

HERE'S THE CROWN

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—Revelation II : 10.

WILL YOU ENLIST?

Sign here

Address

Give this copy of True Blue to the first comrade you can get to enlist, and send for another copy. Get recruits one by one.

BE

Truthful

Brave

Right

Loving

Unselfish

Useful

Earnest

Exemplary

A TRUE BLUE WORD
TO
YOU

“ENDURE HARDNESS AS A GOOD SOLDIER OF
JESUS CHRIST.”—II TIMOTHY 2: 3